

Ask W.P. about "John Wilson"

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and " 31 "

DE 30
1859



Rev. Samuel May, Jr.

H. Childs,

Boston,

U.S.A.

ms. B.1.6 v.17 p.20

Greenfield, Kilgobbin, 7 miles
from Dublin, near the Mountains
December 28 - 1859

My dear Friend
Rev. S. May, Junr.

It is near eleven at night - the stars
are shining as brightly as ever they shine in
the "cold and cloudy clime" - the wind
is rushing furiously outside - the curtains
are drawn & up the windows in the little
parlour - the fire is burning cheerily - the
lamp lighting - and snugly seated near
the sea coal fire are my wife, "John
Wilson", and our Dublin correspondent.
My son Richard & our two girls are in near
Dublin at a local Christmas party. My
son Alfred 12 miles away at the house of
a "large" farmer, who farms 300 acres, & for
whom he is about to operate tomorrow with
his new steam thrashing machine, with
which he has lately started as a means of
making money in the open air, we think.
we build some hopes of his health being
greatly benefited. As far as he has hitherto
tried, the advantage in this respect has been
very great. Although our winter has been
unusually severe, with bitter cold, & a rich
& rapid variety of disagreeable weather, his
strength and spirits have been much im-

proved. This last paper you will naturally
revel is particularly egotistical - but as
I value no parts of my friends letters, with
more interest than those in which they
tell me of themselves, I thought I would give
you a slight sketch of my present sur-
roundings. In your last letter was a separ-
ate slip giving me a friendly and prudent
caution about my present guest.

When he came to me, as he came, with
a letter from W. L. G. - under such circum-
stances I could do no less than take him
home with me. He has since been like
one of the family - and we have had ample
opportunities of testing him - and if with
my knowledge of America & Americans & of
anti-slavery matters he be any thing but
what he represented himself to Mr Garrison
he is an accomplished hypocrite & deceiver
as was said. He states himself to be 52 years
old - but he looks older - & then he ascribes to the
hard life he has led for some few years
past. His father who is still living left Ireland
a "United Irishman" in 1798, at 17 years of age
just as he left ~~for~~ America in 1859 to save
his life to avoid arrest for treason. His
home is at Allegheny City opposite to Pittsburg,
Pa. where he has a wife about 16 years younger
than himself, 5 children, and another soon
expected. His eldest child a girl of 15, & then
youngest a boy of 3. He was a brick maker &

brick layers by trade, and occasionally took
small contracts for doing the brick pattern of
the building of houses, which he says is a
common plan with you. He has also been
engaged as boats trading on the Mississippi,
has traded in horses, has been in South
Carolina, knew John Brown very many
years ago, but met him after a long interval
quite unexpectedly in Kansas. All he
says of Brown is quite consistent with all we
have heard elsewhere of his noble & devoted
character. He says that a sweeping away of
slavery into the north - and not a bloody inter-
section, was the ideal he aimed at. From
the occasional currents he gives of his own
past experience I would judge him to have
been always strongly opposed to slavery. He
has been a man of courage & determination -
but I attribute to his late sufferings & his paralysis
a somewhat feeble expression of apprehension,
altogether unreasonable & unfounded in fact -
that he was still in danger of ~~apprehension~~ ^{arrest}
in these islands. His language on this sub-
ject has been in defiance of argument - and
therefore I would judge the more genuine. It often
recurred, with unvarying perseverance - and he talks
of the good understanding between the U.S.
government & ours - which I believe to be far
from the fact. My own opinion is that our
rulers have no real respect for you, whatever
they may profess to have in a diplomatic or
Pickwickian sense.

the door and perhaps to have been at Harper's
Ferry at the time - but somewhere in the neighbor-
hood - and to be with one exception, the only
one who escaped. I would suppose that in
Missouri or Kansas he has been actual-
ly fighting. He thinks that the abolition of
slavery would be cheaply purchased at the expense
of a good many slaveholders lives. He describes
degradation among slaveholders in South
Carolina, suffering among slaves on the
Mississippi Delta where, and Harbors &
ruin among the settlers in Kansas exactly,
agreeing with what I have learned from
books & papers. I have never asked his real
name. My wife saw a letter lying in his
hat directed to a Mrs Eliza ^{James} Martin very badly
written - but then he has lost the use of his right
arm which is paralyzed. He has had very
kind medical help, & it is told that his only
chance of recovery lies in keeping his mind
quiet. One day being invited by the Doctors to
dine he wrote, while talking of his deplorable
condition, & being a burden to men. I heard
then from my son who happened to see Dr. Dubey
& I warmly assured him that he need not
trouble himself as far I was concerned - that
I was glad to be of use to any friend of Mrs. Burr -
and that anti-slavery professions & feelings were
of no value if they would not induce a man
to help another in such circumstances as his.

His expressions of acknowledgment have been
by no means proper & have all been made
in an accidental manner. Though his
language has a certain puritan sanctity,
~~and~~ he never casts a point on which I
greatly rely. He is by no means educated -
is not a reader beyond the newspapers which
he faintly enjoys when they refer to American
affairs. His language has a remarkable
resemblance of the North of Ireland, which it more
resembles than your American lingo. It is
very odd that it should be so - & that it should
have come to him through his father, who left
Ireland 61 years ago. But so it is. All his
allusions, all his experiences are American.

He is far from sanguine as to your future.
He thinks that the North will continue to
bully and the South to succumb. I think he is
in the right. The enthusiasm exhaled in speeches
& processions, and the long looked for uprising
of northern spirit, & the end of northern for-
bearance have come. I do ~~not~~ think that
the principles, earnestness & dignity of around
public feeling in Ireland are by any means
equalled in the United States. As to our large
"Catholic" majority in Ireland, nothing can be
more meanly, slavishly, degradedly Ultrama-
rine, and ^{it} is arousing, & properly arousing the
contempt of all decent people.

Wilson told us very soon that his wife was not
friendly to his enterprise, thinking he had better
have kept out of it. Her wife has learned from

him that the names of his children are
Sarah, David, Jane, John & Thomas in
the order of their ages. The very often re-
minds me of my own father who was a man
~~very~~ much of his stamp & degree. I often
think ~~how~~ ^{how} much they would have enjoyed
~~one~~ another's company. I have, when reading
aloud in the evening extracts from your
papers relating to John Brown, seen him
deeply affected. This very evening - for
example, while I read from the Liberator,
the deeply touching account of the funeral
where L. M. McKim and Wendell Phillips
were in their proper places among the
mourners and comforters of the family.

Mr Webb has this morning told me that the
gentleman farmer with whom Alfred is tonight,
saw Mr Wilson & family after he had spent a
day there to see Alfred's threshing machine
at work. Miss Estlin has also sent him £1.
and he is at very little expense to Mr W.
encourage him to save all he can. We think
his arm improved. It is rubbed with some
ammunition embrocation every night before
going to bed. He has been at several homes
in our circle & is much pleased with the
attention he has received. The large firm
employment & has been making Zechariah
enquiries for it. The knowledge of the northern
abolitionists is very small - but he regards
Cassius M. with great admiration for his
fearless facing of the slaveholders.

Her home of ore is at the foot of the head of
of the Dublin Mountains to the city. Now the
south west wind rose and rakes outside,
making the smogness within all the greater.

Our guest having gone to bed, I read what
I have written to Mrs Webb and she ~~agrees~~
agrees to all I have said about him. Her
impression is also the same as mine that
his mind was troubled & assured them
when he came, and that the relief with
which Brown is recorded makes him feel
more easy.

Mr Edward Forster, a son in law of Dr
Arnold, a member of the Gurney family,
& a friend of Miss Martineau, wrote to me
since your last letter asking for information
about Brown. I send him the report on
Kantner, a member of Fribourg, and some
letters from Wilson. He means to write an
article upon him for one of the English
Review or Periodicals.

For some months past I have had a rather
hard life. Pressing business engagements
with a great difficulty in getting sufficient hands
especially pressmen, who are generally scarce
in comparison with the work to be done through
out the city. This has caused extreme dif-
ficulty in completing orders & keeping engage-
ments. I am up at 6 1/2 - into town by 8 - & am
that hour till 6 p.m. I have hardly time to look
about me - one matter pressing on the heels of
another. I would much rather have more leisure

I sent on ~~both~~ down to Mrs Chapman
including money due to you on behalf of
our son Richard - also 10/- for Mrs Brown's
family from James Haughton. He wishes
to get one of the tracts prepared to donors of
a dollar. I sent 20/- for same. Please send
me Redpath's book when it appears, for which
I will pay. I would very much like a good
patient - either the dollar or announced
or Redpath - or the photograph given to dollar
donors. Are not the donations at large
gatherings in New England abnormally dispropor-
tionated in amount to the size of the gather-
ings & the enthusiasm they excite? It seems
to me that Berman would get but little. I
would like W.H.S. to know what I have heard
of J. Wilson. The Rev. Dr Thompson of the
N.Y. Independent befriended him in New
York. Wilson did not think him much of an
abolitionist - which I thought showed his
perspective. He is a great admirer of Cassius
Clay - but I believe I said this before.

He sends hearts yours affectionately
but in a great hurry

Rich D Webb

I am sorry to hear of your health failing
I have often told her about myself - but
I get up again & I heartily hope it will
be so with you. Thank you for her note
I think she is always right about
people & the course of events.